

8TH - 14TH
OCTOBER
2023

THE HEAVENS
DECLARE THE
GLORY OF
GOD, SO...

LOOK
UP **PSALM**
19:1

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PRISONSWEEK
A WEEK OF PRAYER



PSALM 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (NIV) the reading for 8 October 2023 Prisons Sunday

There are times when we feel distant or doubt God’s presence in our lives, even crying out in anger or sadness “Where are you now?” But he has promised never to leave us and as we search for truth, love, purpose or forgiveness, there comes the response asking us to “Look up child”.

For centuries Christians learned to pray through the Psalms, the sacred poems and prayers written from the heights and depths of human experience and emotions; despair, loss, anger, betrayal, abandonment, guilt, suffering, confusion, hope, joy, wonder, thanks and praise.

The Psalms have inspired this year’s prayers, written by people with their own experience of prison and criminal justice; prisoners, prison leavers, victims of crime, families and communities, those working or volunteering in prisons and the criminal justice system. We invite you to pray each day this week with them, using one or more of their prayers below. You could also pray using a Psalm that is familiar to you. You could pray as you watch this year’s film on our website, listening to the words of ‘Look up Child’ sung by Lauren Daigle.

When we are weighed down by life, we don’t necessarily have to bow our heads to pray. We can look up to know our heavenly Father’s loving gaze on us. We can look up and see his presence in the wonder of creation and the living world. Whenever and wherever we call or cry out in prayer, “look up child” is the response from a loving God who is always ready to hear, whose faithful love reaches out to us through Jesus and offers us forgiveness and hope, all of our days.

THE PRISONS WEEK PRAYER

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day. Amen

DAY 1

OUT OF THE DEPTHS I CRY TO YOU O LORD
Psalm 130:1

Heavenly Father, thank you for those who work in the prison service. May they be motivated by a desire to help others live well. We pray for any who are discouraged. Help them to look up and cry out to you, for you are both holy and full of mercy and hear our prayers. May they know your unfailing love for them and for the prisoners they serve. Please give them fresh hope and encouragement at work today.

DAY 2

I CRIED OUT TO GOD TO HEAR ME
Psalm 77:1

God, if you are there, I am in the darkness where I am alone and feel abandoned. Will you hear my cries for help? At night the darkness suffocates me but I know your light shines. You know me better than I know myself, and I turn to you in my despair. If you hear me, speak to me. If you are here, visit me. I want to know you and your safety. Rescue me from all my fears.

DAY 3

I WAIT FOR THE LORD...AND IN HIS WORD I PUT MY TRUST
Psalm 130:5

We pray for all those affected by prison – the prisoner, the family or victims. Be near them when they are angry, sad or cry for help. May they be assured of your trust and love for them. Lord, you know us and you are near us wherever we are and whatever we do. Even though we stray so often from your presence may we know the comfort of your loving arms around us.

DAY 4

FOR GREAT IS YOUR LOVE TOWARDS ME; YOU HAVE DELIVERED ME FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE GRAVE
Psalm 86:13

Lord God, I thank you for grace and mercy. Thank you that in receiving your forgiveness I have been able to forgive those who have hurt me and turn that pain into purpose. I pray for those who find themselves in prison, that they will also come to know your goodness and be glad to receive your love, so that their lives too, can be transformed and renewed.

DAY 5

WHERE CAN I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT? WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE?
Psalm 139:7

We look to the God who knows the turbulence we’ve experienced. And we pray that we will find stability. We look to the God who knows our hurt. And we pray that we will find peace. We look to the God who knows who matters to us; those held dearly and missed. And we pray that we will find true family and community. We look to the One who calls each by name, beloved child.

DAY 6

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD
Psalm 46:10

Dear Lord, we lift up to you all of those caught up within the prison system. We ask that as the confusion, mess, violence and addiction is all around we can know that our refuge is in you. We know that we can find rest in you, we know that we can be still and know that you are God. We pray for peace in the heart of each of those behind locked doors and we pray that they would know you close.

DAY 7

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD
Psalm 19:1

Creator God, the heavens declare your glory and you have made me in your image. Come to me in my despair and sadness and remind me that I can do nothing without you. As I lift my eyes and hear the call of Jesus to follow, I thank you that only through you I can be truly at peace with myself and the world.

For nearly 50 years, Prisons Week has encouraged Christians everywhere to pray for prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities and those working or volunteering in the criminal justice system. Please pray each day during Prisons Week but also ask yourself if there is one thing that you as an individual, or as a church, can do to help any of the people for whom you are praying.

For more information, to donate, or to order more leaflets please use the contact details below.

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